



etc... (Experimental Troupe Comedy)

etc... (Experimental Troupe Comedy) is loud, brash and confrontational, and that's what our audience comes to see. In its 11 years *etc...* has made a name in New York City for its challenging political humor and incisive social commentary. Drawing on current events and trends in popular culture, *etc...* creates provocative multimedia comedy that utilizes the troupe members' skills in live performance, web development and film production.

etc... began performing in 1994, the brainchild of six Stuyvesant High School students. The troupe has performed professionally all over New York City over the last 11 years. Since its inception, the troupe has never been satisfied with trivial sketch comedy that settles for cheap laughs. The troupe strives to present a unique point of view that demands an audience to rethink their assumptions.

In March 2004, *etc...* produced *The Recession Carnival Presents 600 Days of Pain*. At the time, unemployment was skyrocketing and the government was indifferent to the plight of people caught in the shifting labor market. There were fewer jobs, and new jobs had less security and fewer benefits. The Carnival revolved around Hero, an unemployed man enduring oblivious friends, overbearing parents, malevolent recruiters and satanic interviewers, all in his unending search for a job in the Bush economy. *Etc...* takes real issues like unemployment and magnifies the absurd elements to force people to think about issues in a way they haven't before.

etc...'s 2004 Fringe NYC production *Apocalypse!: Book One* continued this same tradition. In the 2004 election, the media barraged America with pre-fab sound bites and Swift Boat ads, but many issues were lost in its spineless coverage. The media were just pawns in the political game. In *Apocalypse Book One*, Jesus Christ returns to Earth to run against George W. Bush for president of the United States., and is defeated by a devious W. campaign and the administration's media lackeys. The successful run at the FringeNYC led to *etc...* receiving a Puffin Foundation grant to perform *Apocalypse! Book One* again for a special Election Day Weekend run.

etc... premiered *The Magnificent Hour* at the 2005 New York International Fringe Festival. In *The Magnificent Hour*, the government has declared that murder will be legal for one hour. In the show, a clock was displayed prominently on stage. Over the sixty minutes of the show, *The Magnificent Hour* played itself out in real time. Each night, no one – not the actors, the characters or the audiences – knew how this dark, twisted comedic experiment would end. This multimedia sketch/improvisation experiment was performed for over-capacity houses at the August festival.

etc... currently performs monthly at the at The Peoples Improv Theater with its sketch/improv show, **Law & Order: etc...**, a parody of the long running NBC drama. Law & Order: etc... incorporates participation online through the troupe's blog at www.opensourcecomedy.net. The troupe's video shorts can be seen on opensourcecomedy.net, YouTube, iFilm, and *etc...*'s Myspace page, www.myspace.com/opensourcecomedy.

Company Bios

Jamil Ellis (Co-Founder, Writer, Performer) Theatrical credits (acting): *Law & Order: etc...*, *The Magnificent Hour*, *Apocalypse! Book One*, *600 Days of Pain*, *The Doctor in Spite of Himself* by Moliere, *The Varsity Show* (1997-99, Columbia University), *Runaways* by Elizabeth Swados. Comedic credits: *etc...* (founding member) and Random Artists. Film credits (production): *Diagnosis*, *Basic Emotions*, *Filters*, *February*, *Butterfly Effect*, *I Celebrate Myself*, *No Money Down*. TV credits (production): *On The Record with Bob Costas* (HBO). Writing credits: *The Magnificent Hour*, *Apocalypse! Book One*, *600 Days of Pain*. He has trained at the Atlantic Theater Company School in New York City. He has worked on projects at Miramax, Comedy Central, and The History Channel. He also produces film and tv projects with his company Common Ground Pictures.

Gene Perelson (Co-Founder, Writer, Performer) Theatrical credits (acting): *Woyzeck* (Best Actor nomination, Oxford) by Georg Buchner, *The Revenger's Tragedy* by Thomas Middleton, *Love's Labour's Lost* (International Tour) by Shakespeare, *Marat/Sade* by Peter Weiss, *Hamletmachine* by Heiner Mueller, *Law & Order: etc...*, *The Magnificent Hour*, *600 Days of Pain*, *Apocalypse! Book One*, and *The Real Thing* by Tom Stoppard. Comedic credits *The Oxford Revue* and *etc...* (Founding Member). Film credits: *The Indestructible Brothers*. Radio credits: *Wednesday Roundtable* (WKCR). Writing credits: *Exeunt*, *A Little Treatise About the Mutterings of Some Romantics in the Corner*, *The Magnificent Hour*, *Apocalypse! Book One*, and *600 Days of Pain*. He is also a regular writer for WNYC and has contributed to Harper's Magazine.

Chris Chan Roberson (Co-Founder, Writer, Performer) Theatrical credits (acting): *Law & Order: etc...*, *The Magnificent Hour*, *Apocalypse! Book One*, *Ira* (Right Foot, Left Foot, Or the Daring Young Man in the Cubicle), *etc...* (founding member), *Prof Kane* (Dream Wraith. Film credits (production): *The Fraymaker* (Winner: Pioneer Film Slam, Official Selection Freight Film Festival, N.Y. Indy Int'l Film Fest), *The Indestructible Brothers* (Official Selection Arlene's Grocery Film Fest, Godzookie Arts Fest, Screener's Club Selection). TV credits (editor): *Monkey King Installation*, *Children's Museum of Manhattan*, *TV Land's Andy Griffith Top 10 Episodes*. (assistant editor): *Comedy Central's Friday Night with Greg Giraldo*, *Biography Channel celebrity bios* (Tom Selleck, Johnny Depp, Melissa Gilbert, and Martin Lawrence), *Country Music Awards 2005 Special for Biography Channel*. He is a full-time Professor in the Undergraduate Dept of Film and TV at NYU.

Anne Johnson (Company Member, Writer, Performer) Theatrical credits: *Law & Order: etc...*, *The Magnificent Hour*, *Apocalypse! Book One*, *Me Too*, *Then*, *The Good Doctor*, *A Slight Ache*. Sketch comedy: *Causin' a Scene*, *One Odd Saturday*. Original Works: *Clitty Conversations* (WOW Café Theater), *Buckle Up* (Producer's Club), Improv: *Hooray for Everything* (member) Shakespeare (Actors Shakespeare Company) *Much Ado About Nothing*, *The Merry Wives of Windsor*, *Two Gentlemen of Verona*, *King John*, *A Midsummer's Nights Dream*. Anne has studied at Eric Loeb Studios, the Actors Shakespeare Company and with Brian Siedlecki (Saturday Night Live) and Marci Phillips (ABC) She is a member of the New Jersey Repertory Company and the Actors Shakespeare Company.

PRESS CLIPPINGS



April 15, 2006 – (also in print version of NY Post 4/15/2006)

GUILTY-PLEASURE FILM AND TV TAKES CENTER STAGE

... Over at The People's Improv Theater (154 W. 29th St.), audiences also get in on the action - and solve the crime - as part of an interactive spoof on the ever-addictive Dick Wolf series "Law & Order." "Everybody secretly wants to be Keanu Reeves," says "Point Break LIVE!" co-creator Jamie Hook, a 36-year-old Brooklynite who directs the play, running Sundays at 8 p.m. through the end of April. "Who wouldn't want to be him? He's a big great famous action movie star and 'Point Break LIVE!' gives you that chance. We are saying, 'You don't have to settle.'" Although a procedural drama junkie probably could settle for sitting at home watching "Law & Order" almost 24 hours a day, the new live-stage parody at The P.I.T. allows audience members to solve crimes not so much ripped from the headlines but rather bastardized from the weekly news. One recent whodunit? A murder mystery involving Slobodan Milosevic on alternative Spring Break. The accused culprit? None other than ALF.

"Our show is like fantasy camp for 'Law & Order' fans," says co-creator Jamil Ellis, 28, whose improv group Experimental Troupe Comedy developed the show, which runs the last Saturday of each month at 7 p.m., through July. "People get obsessed with 'Star Trek' conventions and hang out with other people who are fans and dress up. So we're up there dressing up in our own 'Law & Order' personalities." Indeed, obsession is a key factor in bringing these pop pleasures to the stage...

...There is truth to the irresistibility of playing - or reprising certain pop culture roles - on stage. In the "Law & Order" spoof, each show features an actor who has already appeared on the long-running NBC franchise to add an extra level of crime-solving finesse....



(in print version of Daily Variety 3/17/2006)

Off B'way troupe finds humor in 'Order'

By ELIZABETH GUIDER

THESE ARE THEIR STORIES: You know a show has imprinted itself indelibly on the popular imagination when comedians finally get around to parodying it.

That's what's about to happen to "Law & Order" as a group called ETC (as in Experimental Troupe Comedy) readies an Off Broadway spoof of the long-running Dick Wolf-produced legal franchise, now in its gazillionth year on NBC (and everywhere else).

ETC principal Jamil Ellis said all four of the troupe's key players are fans, and have many friends who have appeared in one of Wolf's skeins. (The franchise is the biggest single TV employer of Gotham theater actors ever.) The show, which debuts at the Peoples Improv Theater March 25, is being advertised thusly: "Missing Jerry Orbach? Unable to handle a day without a fix of the only

show that people still watch on NBC? Hungry for grotesque details about an impossibly complicated crime? Wait no longer!"

Ellis said the 11-year-old *Etc.* (which also includes Anne Johnson, Gene Perelson and Chris Chan Roberson) tackles the iconic drama by taking plotlines from audience suggestions -- live and via the Internet (www.opensourcecomedy.net), and utilizing written sketches and multi-media video. Theater folk who have been on Wolf's shows are expected to show up and participate in the performance as well, per Ellis.

Each "episode" of the play, as it were, will also feature an up-and-coming comedy act from the New York area.



The Hits Onstage & Off *Knickerbocker*

BY GARY SHAPIRO
August 15, 2005

What if the American government declared murder to be legal for an hour? That is the unsettling premise of a dark comedy called "The Magnificent Hour," which is part of the New York International Fringe Festival. The theater company Experimental Troupe Comedy performs the play next Tuesday through Saturday at the Theater at the Center for Architecture.

A clock onstage shows time elapsing as the disturbing hour unfolds. Individuals wrestle with the morality of killing. To do so, one first has to visit the local Bureau of Assassination and fill out a form. How violent is this show? "People do die," said Jamil Ellis, a founder of the theater troupe.

Mr. Ellis began the Experimental Troupe Comedy in 1994 with five other classmates at Stuyvesant High School. At the Fringe Festival kick-off party on Thursday at Discotheque on West 19th Street, the *Knickerbocker* talked with two of the founders: Mr. Ellis (class of 1995) and Chris Chan Roberson (1994). They are continuing in a long tradition of Stuyvesant graduates who have entered theater. Other actors who have attended Stuyvesant over the years include James Cagney (1918), Ben Gazzara (1946), Paul Reiser (1973), Tim Robbins (1976), Lucy Liu (1986), and producer Joseph Mankiewicz (1924).

Mr. Ellis went on to study computer engineering at Columbia University. Mr. Roberson studied film at New York University, where he made an undergraduate film based on the Yiddish proverb, "If God owned a house on Earth, people would throw rocks at it." Upon graduation, he joined the NYU faculty, where he teaches film editing and cinematography.

Mr. Roberson and Mr. Ellis have worked together over the years on various projects, including a film called "February," which was released in Thailand. For that film, they managed to get enough permits to close down Times Square for filming one night in November 2003.

Mr. Roberson described a film he has been making called "Space Pirates," about gentrification on the Lower East Side.



The Magnificent Hour: Death... by Hilarity

By Margaret Cross

George W. Bush sure does some wacky things. In the Fringe festival, I mean. Though not known as a particular patron of the arts, our current Commander and Chief and his family have inspired a bevy of Fringe shows in the past few years. Some of them silly, some preachy, some, terrifyingly, featuring nudity. However, my fellow Americans, I ask you to draw your attentions to one particular show... a show whose hilarity stands as an inspiration to us all.

I am referring to "The Magnificent Hour", a sketch-comedy and improv inflected piece presented by experimental comedy troupe Etc... The premise: The President (Gene Perelson) has a new right hand man, red-caped, eye-patch sporting Attorney General Edward Kang (Chris Chan Roberson), and together they have a great idea for our great nation. For one hour, every American will have the power to kill, or rather, "Make Magnificent", one other American... provided they fill out all the correct forms beforehand. A large clock on stage counts down the seconds as we follow various characters through the chaos resulting from the 60 minutes of sanctioned slaughter. Pompous media pundit Elke Pilaf frantically apologizes to thousands of people he's mistreated, to make amends with whomever has named him as their target. A milquetoast bureaucrat hopes to impress his assassin girlfriend by making his first kill. Two bickering anchorpersons cover the mounting hysteria, while Dubya checks in from time to time to comment on the success of this latest national endeavor. All the while, Kang is locked in mental warfare with his nemesis Father Cartier, who espouses forgiveness for all, even in the face of Kangs' gratuitous mur... er, magnificence of an entire parochial basketball team.

The quick-fire scenes are sometimes augmented with improvisation. The audience is asked to fill out cards before the show, describing methods of and reasons for killing someone, and the actors will pull one out from time to time and read it out in the scene. This conceit is used sparingly and wittily enough to keep it from ever becoming trite.

While some of the attempted political commentary is somewhat overdone (a bit involving Osama Bin Ladin is one of the few that fail), Perelsons' GWB is scarily funny. He can squint, smirk, and spout meaningless rhetoric better than any SNL hack. Roberson is wonderful to watch in all his roles. Natalie Kim is winning sexy assassin and the acerbic anchorwoman, and Anne Johnson is a great comedienne, playing a croaky-voiced pubescent boy, a dowdy pencil pusher, and a VERY evil scientist, wearing not one, but TWO eye-patches ("I don't actually need these; I had Lasik").

The Etc... troupe has a winning combination of smart creators and smart performers in this dark comedy, and I look forward to seeing their future projects. In the meantime, their website, www.magnificenthour.com, offers a number of Magnificent extras, including fake commercials, Kangs' blog, and a downloadable pdf "Kill Form", so you can be ready for your chance to "Get Magnificent".



APOCALYPSE! BOOK ONE

reviewed by Alexander Zalben

One thing you can say for sure: We're not in the middle of a political comedy shortage. Although I haven't done a specific count, out of the 200 or so shows in the FringeNYC Festival, there are probably 3000 about how bad George Bush is at being President.

So what makes *Apocalypse! Book One*, a comedy show by the ETC... Theatre Troupe about what happens once Jesus joins the race against George Bush, worth your time?

Well, the acting, for one thing. The six-member cast amiably plays parts ranging from the Four Horseman of the Apocalypse to prominent press figures to the aforementioned Bush and Jesus, with wit and commitment. Robert Michael McClure is particularly good with very specific characters, including a soulful Jesus and a businessman who decides to be perfectly honest with his employees now that the apocalypse is nigh. Gene Perelson is also very good in a variety of goofy character roles. And although I'm not the hugest fan of impressions, he does a George Bush that doesn't seem to be a knock-off of Will Ferrell's iconic performance.

But the standout in the cast is Anne Johnson, who brings a brilliant comic subtlety to every role she plays. Whether playing a low-key Pestilence or a conservative news announcer, Johnson steals every scene she's in.

The one quibble I have with the show, and it's a big one, is that for taking on such weighty topics as the upcoming presidential election, religion, and the state of the world, there's no real depth of analysis. As an audience, we're already aware that Bush mispronounces words. That Cheney is evil. That the media spins things out of control. The best bits here are the small moments, where common people are faced with the threat of apocalypse. But these moments are too few and far between.

So where does that leave us at the end of the day(s)? Political comedy may not be in short supply, but good performances are. Go for the comedy, stay for the Anne Johnson.



Bush II, Part II: What's the Theater to Do?

January 19, 2005 - by [Adrienne Onofri](#)

Look closely at the blue/red electoral map of the U.S. and you may be able to detect extra blue shading around the theaters in New York City. If evangelical Christians are George W. Bush's base, New York's theater artists and audiences could be considered his anti-base. As Edward Albee told the audience at a

recent Drama Desk panel about social change and theater, in his five decades working in the theater he has “never met a serious creative artist that was anything but a liberal Democrat.”

So where does that leave politically charged theater artists now that Bush is beginning, amid \$40 million worth of fanfare this week in Washington, a second term as president? In the heat of the campaign, many of them turned their art into activism last year: Off-off-Broadway offered up a myriad shows with such titles as *Dementia Presidentia*, *Laura’s Bush* and “*I’m Gonna Kill the President!*” while higher-profile productions—among them Tim Robbins’ *Embedded*, the docudrama *Guantanamo*, Sam Shepard’s *God of Hell* and Sigourney Weaver and John Lithgow in A.R. Gurney’s *Mrs. Farnsworth*—tackled personalities and policies of the Bush administration, and antiwar plays from *Lysistrata* to *Idiot’s Delight* to *Hair* were revived.



While Bush’s victory in November did extend the life of many political plays that their own creators had hoped would become outdated, left-leaning theater artists are not spinning the election as anything but a setback. “Many of us felt like we got a swift blow in the stomach and got the wind knocked out of us on that November night,” says Todd Rosen, managing director of the Flea Theater, which produced *Mrs. Farnsworth*. “It will take some time for us to recover and refocus our energy. We respond to our surroundings and feelings with our hearts—it’s just our hearts are a bit broken now.” (A less-

delicate diagnosis comes from Jamil Ellis of the comedy troupe etc..., who reports that it took his company’s George W. Bush portrayer “a while before he could do his impersonation again without feeling like he was going to vomit.”)

Despite the election defeat, politically minded artists feel they gained a lot—in exposure, creativity, purpose—from their busy year. “We found our political voice, increased our audience, and we discovered how to really dig deep into the issues of the day and write and perform meaningful material,” says Ellis.

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Others say they had already broadened their focus before the election, in the interests of creating more substantive work. The comic writer/performers of etc... had depicted Jesus Christ challenging Bush for the presidency in their summer production, *Apocalypse! Book One*, but Ellis says, “We never thought of our show as merely an anti-Bush tirade. It was a satire of the media’s complacency, the indecision of the Democratic Party and the isolation people feel in today’s current political climate.” Jeff Matson, cocreator of a cabaret act called *The Question W Revue*, says his show “also addressed the corporate media, religious fundamentalism, gay marriage and other topics. One can only find so many ways to say ‘Bush sucks’ and make it entertaining. I also think that beneath the anger and frustration there must be a sense of hope and a conviction that political dissent is an essential part of what makes democracy possible and desirable.”



Around the Theater World Here Come the Republicans

August 27, 2004 - by [Adrienne Onofri](#)

“... Judging from *Passion* and other shows in the Fringe, theater artists are especially alarmed by Bush's religious extremism. In *Dementia Presidentia*, the president character (named Arnold Bosch) dismisses the Billy Graham/Jerry Falwell stand-in, Rev. Billy Cantwell, as not pious enough and starts taking orders directly from Jesus, whom he meets in a cafeteria in his dreams. In *Apocalypse! Book One*, Jesus comes back to Earth to prevent Bush from further sullyng his name—and Bush supporters promptly form a group called Christians Against Christ. Another recurring theme in the Fringe's anti-Bush theater is that *anything* is possible with such zealots in power: from missiles pointed at every American city (*Dementia*), to women prosecuted for having miscarriages (*Patriot Acts*), to the Four Horsemen—War, Famine, Pestilence, Death—saddling up for The End (*Apocalypse!*).

Of those three Fringe shows, *Apocalypse! Book One* is superior—a fast-paced burlesque by improv/sketch comedy performers in which Jesus decides to run for president, Famine is on Atkins, and Dick Cheney is played by a black actor. (Hmm, another recurring theme: Jeb Bush is played by a black man in *The Passion of George W. Bush*.) *Dementia* has a couple of funny lines but doesn't really seem to know where to go with its premise, and nothing in it matches the energy of Tom Walker's Jim Carrey-like lead performance. *Patriot Acts* is a well-intentioned compilation of skits and one-acts that illuminate our constitutional rights (and the dangers of losing them), but a predominantly serious tone keeps it from being as entertaining as it could be. *Apocalypse!* has performances Aug. 27-29, *Dementia* closes Aug. 28, and *Patriot Acts'* last show is the afternoon of the 27th. (Already finished its Fringe run: *Hanging Chad*, which criticized virtually everything the Bush administration has done but in the most untheatrical, incohesive way imaginable.) ...”